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BOX PATENT APPLICATION
Assistant Commissioner for Patents
Washington, D.C. 20231

Re: Tetsuya AKIMOTO, Morihisa HIRATA
METHOD AND COMPUTER SOFTWARE PRODUCT FOR CALCULATING A
NUMERICAL VALUE REPRESENTATIVE OF A PROPERTY OF A CIRCUIT
Our Ref. Q55026

Dear Sir:

Attached hereto is the application identified above including 28 sheets of the specification, claims, 4 sheets of drawings, and a copy of the executed Declaration and Power of Attorney. The Assignment will be filed at a later date.

The Government filing fee is calculated as follows:

Total claims	12	-	20	=		x	\$18.00	=	\$0.00
Independent claims	6	-	3	=	3	x	\$78.00	=	\$234.00
Base Fee									\$760.00

TOTAL FILING FEE **\$994.00**

A check for the statutory filing fee of \$994.00 is attached. You are also directed and authorized to charge or credit any difference or overpayment to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fees under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 and 1.17 and any petitions for extension of time under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136 which may be required during the entire pendency of the application to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. A duplicate copy of this transmittal letter is attached.

Priority is claimed from July 6, 1998 based on Japanese Application No. 190685/1998. The priority document will be filed at a later date.

Respectfully submitted,
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METHOD AND COMPUTER SOFTWARE PRODUCT FOR
CALCULATING A NUMERICAL VALUE REPRESENTATIVE OF
A PROPERTY OF A CIRCUIT

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION:

This invention relates to a method of designing a semiconductor integrated circuit, and, in particular, to a method of verifying reliability of the semiconductor integrated circuit.

In a semiconductor integrated circuit, a delay time is caused to occur in an electronic circuit when the electronic circuit includes MOS (Metal Oxide Semiconductor) transistors. Recent years, MOS transistors tend to become very small in size. This makes it impossible to ignore an influence from a hot carrier effect. Moreover, the delay time is also varied by an influence of aging caused by the hot carrier effect.

In a conventional calculation method of the aged delay time, a difference, namely, a degradation rate between delay times before and after aging is calculated from information (input pin information) concerned with each input pin of a logic block and information (input pin device information) concerned with a device connected to the input pin. Hereinafter, the difference or a degradation rate will be called a delay time degradation rate. And then, the aged delay time is calculated from the delay time degradation rate.

Herein, input pin information concerned with rounding and a frequency of waveform inputted to a logic block is provided from a logic level circuit formed by the logic blocks. On the other hand, input pin device information is provided from devices inside of a logic block.

The conventional calculation method will be described in detail with reference to Fig. 1 and is specified by a delay time calculation method depicted by 100. The delay time calculation method is for calculating aged delay time of a logic level circuit. In this method, delay time degradation rate calculation 105 is executed to calculate the aging degradation amount or rate which occurs in one logic block. Such the delay time degradation rate calculation 105 is carried out on the basis of input pin information 102, passage time information 103 and input pin device information 104. The calculation 105 is iterated to all of logic blocks comprising a logic level circuit. From the result of repeated calculation 105, aged delay time calculation 106 is executed and finally, a calculation result 107 is gained.

As mentioned above, in the conventional method of calculating aged delay time of a logic level circuit, the aged delay time of each logic blocks is based only on the input pin information and then the result is applied for a calculation of aged delay time of whole of the logic level circuit. In this method, the accuracy of the aged delay time is low except that each logic block is composed of an inverter of one-stage transistor gate.

In another conventional method, the aged delay time can be obtained with a high accuracy. However, to accomplish such a high accuracy, each of the logic blocks should be separated into a great number of transistor gates to calculate rounding and a frequency of waveform through each transistor gate, instead of calculating the aging degradation amount at each logic block. Specifically, the calculation of aged delay time should be executed each of all transistors included in a logic level circuit. In short, high accuracy and a small amount of calculation have a trade-off relationship in these methods.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION:

It is an object of the present invention to provide methods and computer software products for calculating an aged delay time of a logic level

circuit caused by the hot carrier effect, with both high accuracy and little calculation.

According to this invention, a method for calculating a numerical value V_A , which shows a property of a logic level circuit, from a numerical value V_B , which shows a property of a logic block constituting the logic level circuit, comprises the following steps:

- (a) calculating the V_B from numerical value V_C 's each of which shows property of a transistor constituting part of the logic block; and,
- (b) calculating the V_A from the V_B .

In the above mentioned method at step (a), one V_C may show a property of a transistor connected to an input pin of the logic block and another V_C may show a property of a transistor connected to an output pin of the logic block.

According to this invention, a method for calculating a delay time of a signal passing through a logic level circuit is provided. The logic level circuit consists of a plurality of logic blocks. This method calculates the delay time from pin-to-pin delay time, which is delay time of a signal passing between an input pin and an output pin of a logic block, and block-to-block delay time, which is delay time of a signal passing between two logic blocks connected to each other. Furthermore, this method comprises the following steps:

- (a) calculating the pin-to-pin delay time and the block-to-block delay time without calculating in aging caused by hot carrier effect;
- (b) calculating variations of delay times that signals pass through transistors connected to the input and output pin caused by said aging; and,
- (c) modifying the pin-to-pin delay time and the block-to-block delay time calculated in step (a) by the variations calculated in step (b).

According to this invention, a method for calculating pin-to-pin delay time $T_{\text{io path_aged}}$ and block-to-block delay time $T_{\text{connect_aged}}$ is provided. The

pin-to-pin delay time $T_{\text{io path_aged}}$ is delay time of a signal passing between an input pin and an output pin of a logic block. The block-to-block delay time $T_{\text{connect_aged}}$ is delay time of a signal passing between said two logic blocks connected to each other by a computer. Furthermore, this method comprises the following steps:

(a) calculating an amount of stress S_{in} cast by the input pin and an amount of stress S_{out} cast by the output pin according to the following expression:

$$S = \alpha \left(\frac{C}{W} \right)^{\beta}$$

when it is assumed that a load capacitance is represented by C [pF], constants depending on change of inputted waveform are represented by α and β , and width of channel of the transistor connected to the pin is represented by W [μm];

(b) calculating an aged delay time of the input pin δ_{in} [%] and an aged delay time δ_{out} [%] according to the following expression:

$$\delta = \gamma \left(\frac{\tau S f}{\varepsilon_1 e^{\kappa T}} \right)^{\frac{1}{\varepsilon_2}}$$

when it is assumed that a constant depending on physical structure of the pin is represented by γ , the term of a guarantee of the LSI is represented by τ [hour], constants depending on process are represented by ε_1 , ε_2 and κ , working frequency is represented by f [Hz], and absolute temperature is represented by T [K];

(c) calculating the pin-to-pin delay time $T_{\text{io path_aged}}$ and the block-to-block delay time $T_{\text{connect_aged}}$ according to the following expressions:

$$T_{\text{connect_aged}} = T_{\text{connect_fresh}} (1 + \lambda_{\text{out}} \delta_{\text{out}})$$

$$T_{\text{topath_aged}} = T_{\text{topath_fresh}} (1 + \lambda_{\text{in}} \delta_{\text{in}} + \lambda_{\text{out}} \delta_{\text{out}})$$

when it is assumed that pin-to-pin delay time and block-to-block delay time calculated ignoring aging caused by hot carrier effect are represented by $T_{\text{topath_fresh}}$ [ps] and $T_{\text{connected_fresh}}$ [ps], and ratios of delay times occurred at the input stage and the output stage to whole delay time occurred from the input pin to the output pin are represented by λ_{in} and λ_{out} .

According to this invention, a method for calculating a delay time occurred to a signal passing through a logic level circuit that consists of a plurality of logic blocks comprises the following steps:

- (a) calculating delay times of all said logic blocks according to the method mentioned above; and,
- (b) calculating the delay time of the logic level circuit from the result of step (a).

According to this invention, a computer software product for calculating a numerical value V_A , which shows a property of a logic level circuit, from a numerical value V_B , which shows a property of a logic block constituting the logic level circuit makes a computer execute the following processes:

- (a) calculating the V_B from numerical value V_C 's each of which shows property of a transistor constituting part of the logic block; and,
- (b) calculating the V_A from the V_B .

In the above mentioned computer software product at process (a), one V_C may show a property of a transistor connected to an input pin of the logic block and another V_C may show a property of a transistor connected to an output pin of the logic block.

According to this invention, a computer software product for calculating a delay time of a signal passing through a logic level circuit that consists of a plurality of logic blocks is provided. This computer software product calculates a delay time from pin-to-pin delay time and block-to-block

delay time. The pin-to-pin delay time is delay time of a signal passing between an input pin and an output pin of a logic block. The block-to-block delay time is delay time of a signal passing between two logic blocks connected to each other. Furthermore, the computer software product makes a computer execute the following processes:

- (a) calculating the pin-to-pin delay time and the block-to-block delay time without calculating in aging caused by hot carrier effect;
- (b) calculating variations of delay times that signals pass through transistors connected to the input and output pin caused by said aging; and,
- (c) modifying the pin-to-pin delay time and the block-to-block delay time calculated in step (a) by the variations calculated in step (b).

According to this invention, a computer software product for calculating pin-to-pin delay time $T_{\text{io path_aged}}$ and block-to-block delay time $T_{\text{connect_aged}}$ is provided. The pin-to-pin delay time $T_{\text{io path_aged}}$ is delay time of a signal passing between an input pin and an output pin of a logic block. The block-to-block delay time $T_{\text{connect_aged}}$, which is delay time of a signal passing between said two logic blocks connected to each other by a computer. And then, the computer software product makes a computer execute the following processes:

- (a) calculating an amount of stress S_{in} cast by the input pin and an amount of stress S_{out} cast by the output pin according to the following expression:

$$S = \alpha \left(\frac{C}{W} \right)^{\beta}$$

when it is assumed that a load capacitance is represented by C [pF], constants depending on change of inputted waveform are represented by α and β , and width of channel of the transistor connected to the pin is represented by W [μm];

Fig. 2 scarcely influence rounding (wave distortion) of waveform and load capacitance because distances between the transistors are short on one hand. On the other hand, it has been also found out that the N-channel transistors Tr 211 and Tr 221 connected directly to the input and output pin tend to seriously influence these effects as a result of layout and connection design of a logic circuit. Consequently, it is very effective to calculate the effect of hot electron only in connection with the N-channel transistor Tr 211 and Tr 221.

In general, a logic level circuit is divided into a plurality of logic blocks which may be considered as a minimum unit of the logic level circuit. In this event, it is necessary to acquire information concerning inner transistors for the calculation at every one of the logic blocks. In consequence, aged degradation amounts or rates between delay times before and after aging of Tr 211 and Tr 221 are calculated on the basis of information about load capacitance 212, rounding of waveform 214 caused by inner circuit of a logic block, the size of N-channel transistor, and coefficient for calculating delay time degradation rate.

The delay time degradation rate of an input pin δ_{in} (%) is calculated by the next expression:

$$\delta_{in} = \gamma_{in} \left(\frac{\tau_{ac} S_{in} f_{in}}{\varepsilon_1 e^{\kappa T}} \right)^{\frac{1}{\varepsilon_2}} \quad (1)$$

γ_{in} : constant depending on physical structure of the input pin;

τ_{ac} (hour): guaranteed duration of LSI;

S_{in} : stress of input pin;

f_{in} (Hz): frequency at input pin; and

T (K): absolute temperature.

S_{in} is calculated by the next expression:

C_{in} (pF): load capacitance of transistor connected to input pin;

$$S_{in} = \alpha \left(\frac{C_{in}}{W_{in}} \right)^{\beta} \quad (2)$$

α, β : constants depending on rounding of waveform of input pin; and

W_{in} (μm): width of N-channel transistor connected to input pin.

The delay time degradation rate of output pin δ_{out} (%) is calculated by the next expression:

γ_{out} : constant depending on physical structure of output pin;

$$\delta_{out} = \gamma_{out} \left(\frac{\tau_{ac} S_{out} f_{out}}{\epsilon_1 e^{kT}} \right)^{\frac{1}{\epsilon_2}} \quad (3)$$

S_{out} : stress of output pin; and

f_{out} (Hz): frequency at output pin.

S_{out} is calculated by the next expression:

C_{out} (pF): load capacitance of transistor connected to output pin;

$$S_{out} = \alpha \left(\frac{C_{out}}{W_{out}} \right)^{\beta} \quad (4)$$

α, β : constants depending on rounding of waveform of output pin; and

W_{in} (μm): width of N-channel transistor connected to output pin.

To modify pin-to-pin delay time for delay time degradation rate caused by the hot electron effect, the delay time degradation rate of Tr 211,

which is connected to the input pin, is considered to calculate the pin-to-pin delay time. Similarly, the delay time degradation rate of Tr 221, which is connected to the output pin, is considered to calculate both the pin-to-pin delay time and the block-to-block delay time. According to this concept, it is possible to calculate pin-to-pin delay time and block-to-block delay time modified for the hot electron effect. Pin-to-pin delay time T_{iopath_aged} (ps) modified for delay time degradation rate and block-to-block delay time $T_{connect_aged}$ (ps) modified for delay time degradation rate are given by the next expressions:

$$T_{iopath_aged} = T_{iopath_fresh} (1 + \lambda_{in} \delta_{in} + \lambda_{out} \delta_{out}) \quad (5)$$

$$T_{connect_aged} = T_{connect_fresh} (1 + \lambda_{out} \delta_{out}) \quad (6)$$

λ_{in} : the ratio of the delay time occurred at the input pin to the delay time between the input pin and the output pin; and

λ_{out} : the ratio of the delay time occurred at the output pin to the delay time between the input pin and the output pin.

(2) Second embodiment

Next, description will be made about a method for calculating delay time of a logic level circuit, which is the second embodiment of the present invention referring to Fig. 3. In this method, the logic level circuit comprises a plurality of logic blocks.

By giving attention to one logic block included in the logic level circuit, the input pin information 302, passage time information 303 and input pin device information 304 are assembled. The passage time information 303 is given in the form of year. And then, the delay time degradation rate, which is caused to occur at the N-channel transistor connected to the input pin of the logic block, is calculated in the delay degradation calculation 305.

Herein, the input pin information 302 is part of circuit information 301 calculated for the logic level circuit according to the input pin. And herein, the input pin device information 304 is concerned with an inside circuit of the logic block.

Similarly to the delay time degradation rate calculation 305, the delay time degradation rate related to the output pin is calculated. in the delay time degradation rate calculation 308. By paying attention to one logic block included in the logic level circuit, the passage time information 303, the output pin information 306, and output pin device information 307 are assembled. And then, the delay time degradation rate, which is occurred at the N-channel transistor connected to the output pin of the logic block, is calculated in the delay time degradation rate calculation 305. Herein, the output pin information 306 is a part of circuit information 301 calculated for the logic level circuit according to the output pin. And herein, the output pin device information 307 is concerned with devices of the logic block.

The results of the delay time degradation rate calculation 305 and 308 are used or applied in the pin-to-pin delay time calculation 309. Furthermore, the result of the calculation 308 is given to the block-to-block delay time calculation 310. Finally, the calculation result 311 is acquired from the result of the pin-to-pin delay time calculation 309 and the block-to-block delay time calculation 310.

(3) Third embodiment

Next, description will be made about the third embodiment of the present invention referring to Fig. 4. This embodiment is a method for calculating delay time of a logic level circuit when the delay time is aged because of the hot electron effect.

At first, delay time calculation 402 and operating frequency calculation 403 are executed on the basis of logic level circuit information 401. On the one hand, the delay time calculation 402 is a conventional

method for calculating delay time without reference to the hot electron effect. And the delay time calculation 402 calculates rounding of waveform at input pin, load capacitance at output pin, pin-to-pin delay time, and block-to-block delay time by each of logic block included in the logic level circuit. On the other hand, the operating frequency calculation 403 is a kind of method for calculating operating frequency by using a probability propagation technique. And the operating frequency calculation 403 calculates frequency with which input and output pin of each logic block in the logic level circuit are driven.

The result of the delay time calculation 402 is produced as input pin information 404 and delay time 406. The result of the operating frequency calculation 403 is produced as output pin information 405. The input pin information 404 comprises rounding of waveform and operating frequency at the input pin. The output pin information 405 comprises load capacitance and operating frequency at the output pin. The delay time 406 comprises both pin-to-pin delay time and block-to-block delay time.

In addition to the input pin information 404 and output pin information 405, input pin device information 407 and output pin device information 408 are used in delay time degradation rate calculation 409 and 410. The input pin device information 407 is concerned to inside of a logic block, and herein, shows some coefficients of expression (1) and (2) like as channel width of N-channel transistor connected to input pin.

The delay time degradation rate calculation 409 and 410 calculate degradation rate between delay times before and after passing time from rounding of inputted waveform, output load capacitance, operating frequency, and size of N-channel transistor of input and output pin. According to the expression (1) and (2), the calculation 409 calculates the degradation rate of input pin in application of rounding of waveform at input pin calculated in the delay time calculation 402, operating frequency calculated in the frequency calculation 403, and the size of N-channel transistor connected to input pin

and other coefficients assembled from the input pin device information 407. Similarly, according to the expression (3) and (4), the calculation 410 is for calculating the degradation of output pin in application of load capacitance at output pin, operating frequency calculated in the frequency calculation 403, and the size of N-channel transistor connected to output pin and other coefficients assembled from the output pin device information 408.

After execution of the delay time degradation calculation 409 and 410, pin-to-pin delay time degradation 411 is calculated from the degradations of input and output pins. Similarly, block-to-block delay time degradation 412 is calculated from the degradation of output pin. Referring to these degradations, delay time modification 413 is executed to modify the delay time 406 calculated in the delay time calculation 402 according to the expression (5) and (6). Finally, calculation result 414 is calculated.

(4) Derivation of expressions

Hereinafter, description will be made about how to derive the expressions from (1) to (6).

(4-1) Derivation of the expression (1) and the expression (3)

In MOS transistor, degradation caused by hot carriers exponentially progresses in accordance DC stress time t_{dc} . The degradation is denoted by D and is given by:

$$D = (At_{dc})^n \quad (7)$$

In the above expression, n and A depend on process and bias.

On the other hand, the degradation D is given by the following expressions with drain current I_{ds} and mutual conductance g_m :

$$D = \frac{I_{ds} - I_{ds0}}{I_{ds0}} = \Delta I_{ds} \quad (8)$$

$$D = \frac{g_m - g_{m0}}{g_{m0}} = \Delta g_m \quad (9)$$

Furthermore, the degradation D is shown by :

$$D = \left\{ \frac{I_{ds}}{BW} \left(\frac{I_{sub}}{I_{ds}} \right)^m t_{dc} \right\}^n \quad (10)$$

In the above, W is the channel width of transistor. B and m depend on process and bias. The expression (10) is proposed by C. Hu (C. Hu et al. IEEE Transaction on Electron Devices Vol. ED-32, No. 2, pp375, 1985).

When a value "age" is given by the next expression:

$$age = \frac{I_{ds}}{BW} \left(\frac{I_{sub}}{I_{ds}} \right)^m t, \quad (11)$$

the age under DC bias stress $ageDC(t_{dc})$ is given by the following:

$$ageDC(t_{dc}) = \frac{I_{ds}}{BW} \left(\frac{I_{sub}}{I_{ds}} \right)^m t_{dc}, \quad (12)$$

and the age under AC bias stress $ageAC(t_{ac})$ is given by the following:

$$ageAC(t_{ac}) = \int_0^{t_{ac}} \frac{I_{ds}}{BW} \left(\frac{I_{sub}}{I_{ds}} \right)^m dt \quad (13)$$

In the case where AC bias has an iterative waveform at a frequency T, the expression (13) is transformed into:

$$ageAC(t_{ac}) = \frac{t_{ac}}{T} \int_0^{t_{ac}} \frac{I_{ds}}{BW} \left(\frac{I_{sub}}{I_{ds}} \right)^m dt \quad (14)$$

On the condition that DC stress is equal to AC stress, the following holds:

$$ageDC(t_{dc}) = ageAC(t_{ac}) \quad (15)$$

By making a substitution the expressions (12) and (14) for the expression (15), assuming that $f=1/T$, the following expressions (16) and (17) hold:

$$R = \frac{t_{dc}}{t_{ac}} = \frac{\frac{1}{T} \int_0^T \frac{I_{ds}}{BW} \left(\frac{I_{sub}}{I_{ds}} \right)^m dt}{\left| \frac{I_{ds}}{BW} \left(\frac{I_{sub}}{I_{ds}} \right)^m \right|_{dc}} \quad (16)$$

$$= Sf \quad (17)$$

In the case where the objective circuit of the calculation is like an inverter on the conditions that the voltage of inputted signal changes from 0 to V_{DD} (V_{DD} to 0), and the voltage of output signal changes from V_{DD} to 0 (0 to V_{DD}), the following holds:

$$ageAC(t) > 0 : 0 < input < V_{DD}, 0 < output < V_{DD} \quad (18)$$

$$\sim 0 : input = 0 \text{ or } V_{DD}, output = 0 \text{ or } V_{DD}$$

When an input signal changes from low level to high level, a transmission delay time in the inverter shown in Fig. 4 is mainly decided by N-channel transistor's ability to drive current and is shown in the following expression:

$$t_{pd} = \frac{aC}{K_n} \quad (19)$$

a: constant; and

C: load capacitance of output.

Herein, when mobility is μ_n , capacitance of gate oxide film is C_{ox} , width of gate is W and length of gate is L, K_n is given by:

$$K_n = \frac{\mu_n C_{ox} W}{L} \quad (20)$$

Because of degradation caused by the hot carrier effect, the following expression holds in the case that when K_n of N-channel transistor decreases by ΔK_n , t_{pd} increases by δ :

$$\delta = \frac{aC}{K_n} \times \Delta K_n \quad (21)$$

$$\propto \Delta K_n$$

From the expression (7), ΔK_n is given by:

$$\Delta K_n = (At_{dc})^n \quad (22)$$

From the expression (21), $\delta = \gamma \Delta K_n$. Consequently, the following holds:

$$\frac{\delta}{\gamma} = (At_{dc})^n \quad (23)$$

From the expression (17) and expression (23), the following holds:

$$\delta = \gamma (ASft_{ac})^n \quad (24)$$

In the expression (24), A is a parameter depending on temperature.

For example, the expression (24) is shown from an actual measurement as the following:

$$A \propto e^{-\kappa T} \quad (25)$$

Herein, A, t_{ac} and n are substituted like the following:

$$A = \frac{1}{\varepsilon_1 e^{\kappa T}}$$

$$t_{ac} = \tau \quad (26)$$

$$n = \frac{1}{\varepsilon_2}$$

In the consequent, the following is acquired.

$$\delta = \gamma \left(\frac{\tau S f}{\varepsilon_1 e^{\kappa T}} \right)^{\frac{1}{\varepsilon_2}} \quad (27)$$

(4-2) Derivation of expression (2) and expression (4)

Stress S depends on the ratio of load capacitance C to width of transistor(s), which is (are) N-channel transistor or (and) P-channel transistor, rise time T_r and fall time T_f of input pin. Stress S is shown in the following function:

$$S = F \left(\frac{C}{W}, T_r, T_f \right) \quad (28)$$

S is computed by calculation of the following expression in a circuit simulation by the use of SPICE and the like by changing C/W, T_r and T_f .

$$S = \frac{\int_0^T \frac{I_{ds}}{BW} \left(\frac{I_{sub}}{I_{ds}} \right)^m dt}{\left| \frac{I_{ds}}{BW} \left(\frac{I_{sub}}{I_{ds}} \right)^m \right|_{dc}} \quad (29)$$

When S is approximated in the expression (29) by a function of C/W, the following is gained:

$$S = \alpha \left(\frac{C}{W} \right)^\beta \quad (30)$$

where α and β are constants depending on structure of circuit, T_r and T_f .

(4-3) Derivation of the expression (5) and (6)

In a logic block comprising three stage inverters each of which has the same delay time, when the input changes from low level to high level, λ is shown by the following:

$$\begin{aligned} \lambda_{in} &= \frac{1}{3} \\ \lambda_{out} &= \frac{1}{3} \end{aligned} \quad (31)$$

and when the input changes from high level to low level, λ is shown by the following:

$$\begin{aligned} \lambda_{in} &= 0 \\ \lambda_{out} &= 0 \end{aligned} \quad (32)$$

Similarly to Fig. 6, in four stage inverters each of which has the same delay time, when the input changes from low level to high level, λ is shown by the following:

$$\begin{aligned}\lambda_{in} &= \frac{1}{4} \\ \lambda_{out} &= 0\end{aligned}\quad (33)$$

and when the input changes from high level to low level, λ is shown by the following:

$$\begin{aligned}\lambda_{in} &= 0 \\ \lambda_{out} &= \frac{1}{4}\end{aligned}\quad (34)$$

(5) Effect of the present invention

Delay time degradation which occurs in a logic circuit owing to the hot electron effect is serious in a transistor which has large rounding of inputted waveform or large load capacitance of output.

A logic circuit inside a logic block is previously arranged and wired on LSI in small area so that transistors inside of the block have small rounding of input waveform and load capacitance of output. On the other hand, transistors connected to the input/output pin of a logic block tend to have large rounding of input waveform and load capacitance of output because distance between logic blocks and length of wires between logic blocks are determined by a tool for arranging and wiring LSI.

Therefore, it is possible to calculate accurately an degradation rate of delay time in a logic circuit caused in the hot electron effect by paying attention to the input and output pin of a logic block.

Namely, the present invention firstly calculates delay time degradation rate of an input pin and an output pin, and secondly modifies delay time by the delay time degradation rate. In consequence, the present invention provides a delay time calculation method with both high accuracy and low cost of calculation. The method of the present invention is immediately available for circuit simulation, static timing analysis.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of calculating, by the use of a computer, a numerical value V_A representative of a circuit property of a logic level circuit, from a numerical value V_B , which shows a block property of a logic block included in the logic level circuit, comprising the steps of:

- (a) calculating the V_B from numerical values V_C 's each of which represents a transistor property of a transistor included in the logic block; and,
- (b) calculating the V_A from the V_B .

2. A method as in claim 1 wherein, in the step (a), each V_C shows a specific one of the transistor property of the transistor connected to an input pin of the logic block and another V_C shows another specific one of the transistor property of the transistor connected to an output pin of the logic block.

3. A method of calculating, by the use of a computer, a delay time of a signal passing through a logic level circuit which consists of a plurality of logic blocks from pin-to-pin delay time, which is delay time of a signal passing between an input pin and an output pin of a logic block, and block-to-block delay time, which is delay time of a signal passing between two logic blocks connected to each other, comprising the steps of:

- (a) calculating the pin-to-pin delay time and the block-to-block delay time without calculating in aging caused by hot carrier effect;
- (b) calculating variations of delay times that signals pass through transistors connected to the input and output pin caused by said aging; and,
- (c) modifying the pin-to-pin delay time and the block-to-block delay time calculated in step (a) by the variations calculated in step (b).

4. A method of calculating, by the use of a computer, pin-to-pin delay time $T_{\text{io path_aged}}$, which is delay time of a signal passing between an input pin and an output pin of a logic block, and block-to-block delay time $T_{\text{connect_aged}}$,

which is delay time of a signal passing between said two logic blocks connected to each other, comprising the steps of:

(a) calculating an amount of stress S_{in} cast by the input pin and an amount of stress S_{out} cast by the output pin according to the following expression:

when it is assumed that a load capacitance is represented by C [pF], constants

$$S = \alpha \left(\frac{C}{W} \right)^\beta$$

depending on change of inputted waveform are represented by α and β , and width of channel of the transistor connected to the pin is represented by W [μ m];

(b) calculating an aged delay time of the input pin δ_{in} [%] and an aged delay time δ_{out} [%] according to the following expression:

when it is assumed that a constant depending on physical structure of the pin

$$\delta = \gamma \left(\frac{\tau S f}{\varepsilon_1 e^{\kappa T}} \right)^{\frac{1}{\varepsilon_2}}$$

is represented by γ , the term of a guarantee of the LSI is represented by τ [hour], constants depending on process are represented by ε_1 , ε_2 and κ , working frequency is represented by f [Hz], and absolute temperature is represented by T [K];

(c) calculating the pin-to-pin delay time T_{iopath_aged} and the block-to-block delay time $T_{connect_aged}$ according to the following expressions:

when it is assumed that pin-to-pin delay time and block-to-block delay time

$$T_{iopath_aged} = T_{iopath_fresh} (1 + \lambda_{in} \delta_{in} + \lambda_{out} \delta_{out})$$

$$T_{connect_aged} = T_{connect_fresh} (1 + \lambda_{out} \delta_{out})$$

calculated ignoring aging caused by hot carrier effect are represented by

$T_{\text{lopath_fresh}}$ [ps] and $T_{\text{connected_fresh}}$ [ps], and ratios of delay times occurred at the input stage and the output stage to whole delay time occurred from the input pin to the output pin are represented by λ_{in} and λ_{out} .

5. A method of calculating, by the use of a computer, a delay time occurred to a signal passing through a logic level circuit that consists of a plurality of logic blocks, comprising the steps of:

(a) calculating delay times of all said logic blocks according to the method as in claim 3; and,

(b) calculating the delay time of the logic level circuit from the result of step (a).

6. A method of calculating, by the use of a computer, a delay time occurred to a signal passing through a logic level circuit that consists of a plurality of logic blocks, comprising the steps of:

(a) calculating delay times of all said logic blocks according to the method as in claim 4; and,

(b) calculating the delay time of the logic level circuit from the result of step (a).

7. A computer software product for calculating a numerical value V_A , which shows a property of a logic level circuit, from a numerical value V_B , which shows a property of a logic block constituting the logic level circuit, the product making a computer execute the following processes:

(a) calculating the V_B from numerical value V_C 's each of which shows property of a transistor constituting part of the logic block; and,

(b) calculating the V_A from the V_B .

8. A computer software product as in claim 7 wherein in process (a) one V_C shows a property of a transistor connected to an input pin of the logic block and another V_C shows a property of a transistor connected to an output pin of the logic block.

9. A computer software product for calculating a delay time of a signal passing through a logic level circuit which consists of a plurality of logic blocks from pin-to-pin delay time, which is delay time of a signal passing between an input pin and an output pin of a logic block, and block-to-block delay time, which is delay time of a signal passing between two logic blocks connected to each other, the product making a computer execute the following processes:

- (a) calculating the pin-to-pin delay time and the block-to-block delay time without calculating in aging caused by hot carrier effect;
- (b) calculating variations of delay times that signals pass through transistors connected to the input and output pin caused by said aging; and,
- (c) modifying the pin-to-pin delay time and the block-to-block delay time calculated in step (a) by the variations calculated in step (b).

10. A computer software product for calculating pin-to-pin delay time $T_{\text{io path_aged}}$, which is delay time of a signal passing between an input pin and an output pin of a logic block, and block-to-block delay time $T_{\text{connect_aged}}$, which is delay time of a signal passing between said two logic blocks connected to each other by a computer, the product making a computer execute the following processes:

- (a) calculating an amount of stress S_{in} cast by the input pin and an amount of stress S_{out} cast by the output pin according to the following expression:

when it is assumed that a load capacitance is represented by C [pF], constants

$$S = \alpha \left(\frac{C}{W} \right)^{\beta}$$

depending on change of inputted waveform are represented by α and β , and width of channel of the transistor connected to the pin is represented by W [μm];

(b) calculating an aged delay time of the input pin δ in [%] and an aged delay time δ out [%] according to the following expression: when it is assumed that a constant depending on physical structure of the pin

$$\delta = \gamma \left(\frac{\tau S f}{\varepsilon_1 e^{\kappa T}} \right)^{\frac{1}{\varepsilon_2}}$$

is represented by γ , the term of a guarantee of the LSI is represented by τ [hour], constants depending on process are represented by ε_1 , ε_2 and κ , working frequency is represented by f [Hz], and absolute temperature is represented by T [K];

(c) calculating the pin-to-pin delay time T_{iopath_aged} and the block-to-block delay time $T_{connect_aged}$ according to the following expressions:

$$T_{iopath_aged} = T_{iopath_fresh} (1 + \lambda_{in} \delta_{in} + \lambda_{out} \delta_{out})$$

$$T_{connect_aged} = T_{connect_fresh} (1 + \lambda_{out} \delta_{out})$$

when it is assumed that pin-to-pin delay time and block-to-block delay time calculated ignoring aging caused by hot carrier effect are represented by T_{iopath_fresh} [ps] and $T_{connect_fresh}$ [ps], and ratios of delay times occurred at the input stage and the output stage to whole delay time occurred from the input pin to the output pin are represented by λ_{in} and λ_{out} .

11. A computer software product for calculating a delay time occurred to a signal passing through a logic level circuit that consists of a plurality of logic blocks, the product making a computer execute the following processes:

- (a) calculating delay times of all said logic blocks according to the product as in claim 9; and,
- (b) calculating the delay time of the logic level circuit from the result of step (a).

12. A computer software product for calculating a delay time occurred to a signal passing through a logic level circuit that consists of a plurality of logic blocks, the product making a computer execute the following processes:

- (a) calculating delay times of all said logic blocks according to the product as in claim 10; and,
- (b) calculating the delay time of the logic level circuit from the result of step (a).

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To calculate pin-to-pin delay time, which is delay time from the input pin to the output pin of a logic block, and block-to-block delay time, which is delay time from an output pin of one block to an input pin of the next block, firstly, the pin-to-pin delay time and the block-to-block delay time are calculated with negligence in aging caused by a hot carrier effect, secondly, degradations caused by aged transistors connected to the input pin and the output pin, and lastly, the pin-to-pin delay time and block-to-block delay time are modified by the degradation rate.

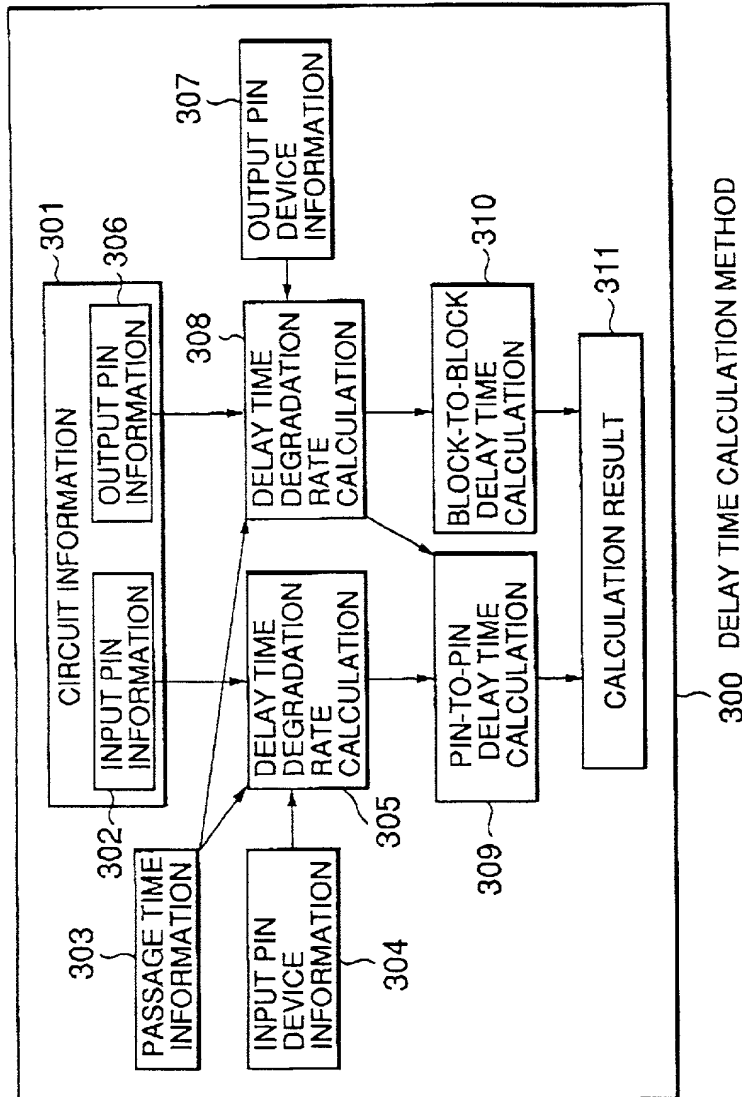


FIG.3

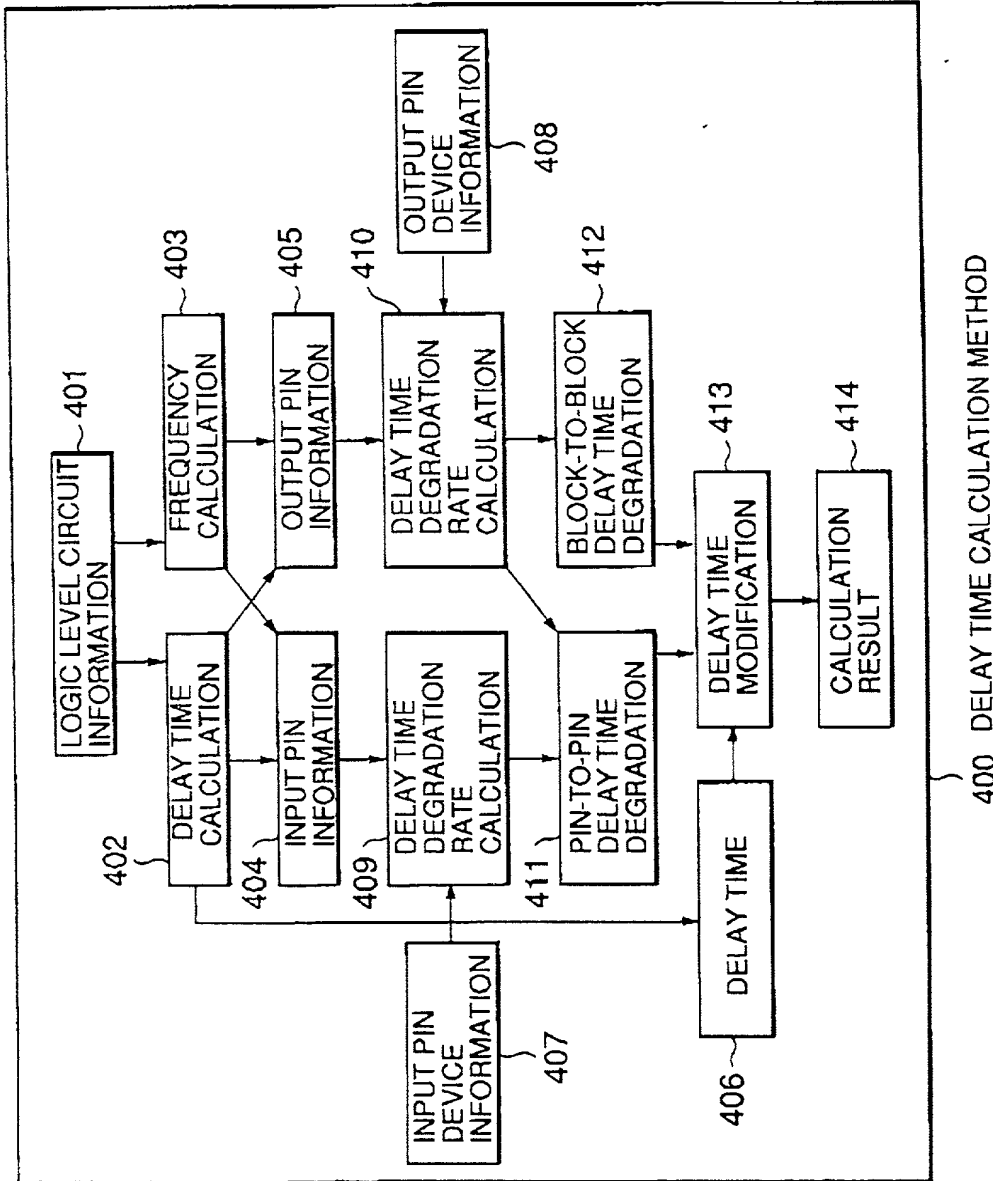


FIG.4

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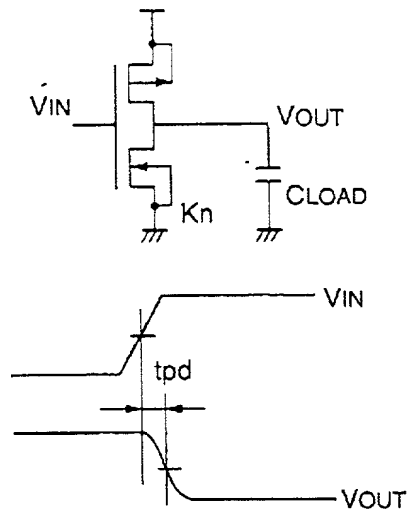


FIG.5

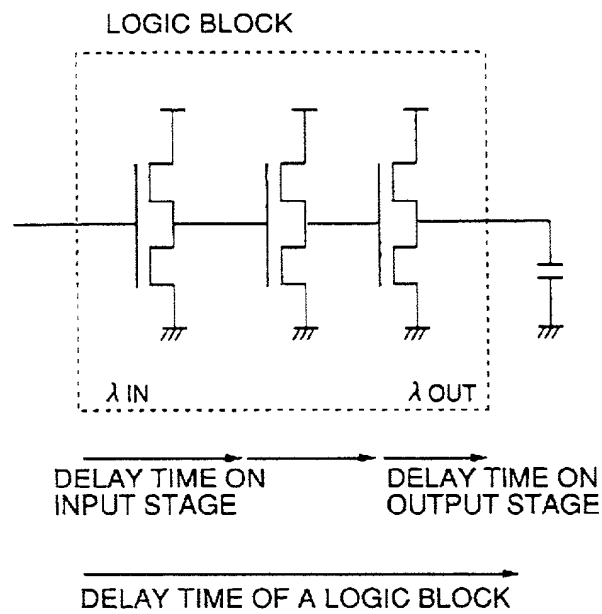


FIG.6

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